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A Freeze on Nuclear Weapons?

YES—The arms race “could subject the entire world to holocaust”



Interview With
Senator
Mark O. Hatfield

Republican,
Of Oregon

Q Senator Hatfield, why are you sponsoring a proposal in Congress that calls upon the superpowers to put a freeze on nuclear-weapons construction?

A Because the U.S. has had superiority in nuclear weapons ever since World War II, when the Soviets didn't even have the bomb, and yet it is evident that the more nuclear weapons we build, the more they will build. And the result is less security in the world. Nuclear superiority is not only a meaningless term in the age of multiple overkill, it is a hindrance at the bargaining table.

Now not only do the Soviets have the bomb, but by the end of this century an estimated 60 nations will be capable of building nuclear weapons. We must halt this kind of madness. It could subject the entire world to nuclear holocaust—the end of the planet.

Q Wouldn't a freeze simply perpetuate the substantial Soviet advantage in medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe?

A First of all, the U.S. has a massive nuclear-weapons capability in Europe. The Soviets have 2,000 missiles, and we have 1,200. The U.S. total includes invulnerable, forward-based submarines, two of which could knock out every major Russian city.

Globally, we have over 9,000 warheads, and the Soviets have 7,000. Furthermore, our warheads are far more accurate. When we look at the nuclear arsenals in their totality, we have a more destructive arsenal than the Soviets.

Q Could a freeze prevent the building of our B-1 and Stealth bombers and leave the Soviets free to enlarge their air defenses?

A You must remember that there are other parts of our arsenal that will survive an attack and have significant deterrence value. Secondly, we can seek to negotiate a collateral agreement constraining U.S. and Soviet air-defense improvements.

Q But wouldn't the U.S. bomber force be rendered virtually useless against Russia if our airborne-cruise-missile program were killed by a freeze?

A Absolutely not. First, current war plans call for pre-attacks on Soviet air defenses that would leave them badly damaged. In addition, our current bomber, the B-52, is now equipped to suppress air defenses. The Air Force is on record saying that the B-52 bomber will have a penetration capability at least until 1990 and perhaps well beyond. Also, it is worth noting that the production of a new Soviet bomber the Pentagon claims is being developed would be prohibited with a freeze.

Q What about the vulnerability of land-based missiles?

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NO—It “would perpetuate an unstable situation” that increases the risk of war



Interview With
Richard R. Burt

Director of Politico-Military
Affairs, Department of State

Q Mr. Burt, why is the Reagan administration opposed to a nuclear-weapons freeze?

A There are two basic reasons:

The first is that we think it would lock us into some military disadvantages. In Europe, the Soviet Union has a force of 600 intermediate-range missiles with 1,200 warheads. The Soviets thus have a massive capability to target our allies. The U.S. has no equivalent systems. Furthermore, the Soviet Union has developed over the last 15 years a new generation of intercontinental ballistic missiles which threatens a large fraction of our existing land-based missile force. Again, we have no equivalent capability. We cannot allow these disadvantages to continue in perpetuity.

Secondly, the administration believes that we can do better than a freeze.

Q Better in what way?

A Our objective, both in the current talks in Geneva on intermediate-range nuclear forces and in the forthcoming strategic-arms talks, will be significant reductions in the existing arsenals of both sides. We believe that if both sides' forces are frozen at current levels, the Soviet Union will have no incentives whatsoever to take our proposals for reductions seriously. In fact, the only reason we have negotiations going on now in Geneva on intermediate-range missiles is that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1979 decided to modernize its capabilities in response to the Soviet buildup of intermediate-range nuclear forces.

Q Looking beyond the situation in Europe, where you say the Soviet Union has a substantial advantage, wouldn't a freeze leave the U.S. with a big edge in strategic warheads all told?

A Well, there are many different ways to measure the overall balance. The fact is that by most measures of strategic nuclear capability the Soviet Union is ahead of the United States right now.

We believe that both the Soviet Union and the United States should reduce the level of nuclear arms they presently possess. So the real question is not how to accomplish a freeze at existing numbers; it is how to achieve limitations at reduced levels. And that's what the Reagan administration wants—agreed limits at reduced levels. We want to negotiate significant reductions, and history has shown that the only way to do that is to give the Soviets incentives for negotiating.

Q Would a freeze actually end the nuclear arms race?

A No. First of all, a freeze would be extremely difficult to verify and therefore would not limit the Soviets' ability

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